

# After Baptism, He Speaks

*by* John Riley

Today I am seventy-four soon seventy-six  
years will have passed beneath my feet  
unseen, too light a trickle  
to wet the earth, nor a lyric either.

The world is full of dead dogs  
and the words of muddy old men.  
More can be remembered than unloaded.  
I thought my brow could bear the pressure  
that would carry me over the arc  
to where the last bells ripen,  
set free all my clandestine things,  
but sounds too soft to echo  
convinced me to stop  
where sleep might accommodate me.

Outside stands a belief.  
Inside the room grows smaller until  
all that is left is a forest  
in the mind of a man  
who wants to imagine empty spaces.

